
Groom Lake sightings 15-16Dec94

Hoping to see or hear some evidence of an "Aurora", I arrived at the Medlin Ranch's Black Mailbox along Nevada SR375 on Thursday night, 15Dec94, at almost exactly 9 PM, PST. The weather was cold (low teens), and the skies were very clear, but there was a full moon. I didn't expect to see or hear anything because it wasn't a Wednesday night, and I've often read that, in general, secret aircraft avoid flying during a full moon, in case the moon provides enough light for someone to see something.

I had noticed some unusually asynchronous, very faint, reddish lights over the Groom Lake area as soon as I descended from Hancock Summit on Nev SR375 into the Tikaboo Valley. As soon as I parked at the Black Mailbox, I aligned my rental car to point directly toward the runway, using my compass and Glenn Campbell's compass rose for the Black Mailbox (in his Area 51 Viewer's Guide Ed 2.04). With my 10x50 binoculars that I brought from home, I immediately noticed that these lights (and whatever was carrying them) were different from anything that I had ever seen.

One unusual characteristic was that the lights were very asynchronous -- except that out of every 15-second period of time, there were 1 or 2 sets of 3-5 consecutive flashes of light that flashed at a frequency of about 1 Hz (once a second).

The duration of the light flash was much shorter than that of regular aircraft beacons, but similar to that of the white strobe lights that regular aircraft use for increased visibility.

The color of the lights varied from pink to red to white to greenish white -- but the colors I saw didn't relate to whether they were moving generally to my right or to my left, which is unlike the navigation lights of regular airplanes.

The intensity of the lights increased in the same order as the color -- from pink to red to white to greenish-white. However, the intensity of even the brightest greenish-white lights seemed less bright than that of the white strobe lights on regular aircraft.

What I consider most remarkable is that the color and the intensity of the lights seemed to be directly related to the speed and distance that the vehicle moved *with each impulse of energy that it expended*. Also, the vehicle appeared to come to a stop in mid-air between each movement, perhaps because of the strobe-light effect of

the lights. Even with the full moon that night, I still couldn't make out the shape or size of the craft that I was watching. I also couldn't see any other lights (on these craft) except the "strobe light." However, the strobe light definitely had a horizontal shape of some kind -- either elliptical or rectangular. The lights were either extremely well stabilized horizontally, or else the vehicle was, because, during my more than 8 hours of observation, I never saw one of these lights vary from perfectly horizontal -- even during the extreme maneuvers described below. In other words, even with the horizontal nature of the lights, I never saw any apparent turns or changes in direction during the flashes of light; again, perhaps because of the strobe-light effect of the lights. The motions of these craft were usually very random, jerky, and zig-zagging. From one impulse to the next, they often moved up, down, left, right, forward, or backward -- even at high speed -- again, with no visible change in direction or turning between impulses -- and with no regard to the previous impulse's direction or speed of movement (as if the craft had no mass or inertia). However, when any one craft wanted to move in generally one direction, they could do so. During the more than 8 hours that I watched them, I only saw a handful of instances when a craft appeared to move in a relatively straight line like a regular airplane, and all of these lasted less than 5 seconds. I ruled out the possibility of these lights being from a helicopter within my first 5 minutes of observation, because of their speed and remarkable changes in direction, regardless of their movement during the previous impulse.

Another notable feature is that there was absolutely no sound from any of these craft, even though I observed and easily heard a couple of high-performance fighter-type of aircraft, maybe F-15s, during the daylight the next day -- and the F-15s seemed to be several miles farther away. Also, unlike with the F-15s, I did not see any exhaust smoke or contrails from these craft at any time, during either of the two nights I watched them.

From triangulation (plotting lines of sight on a DOD 1:250K JOG Chart), using the black mailbox and two other viewing spots a few miles north and south along SR375, the 5-6 craft I watched were between 15 and 20 miles away from SR375. I had a very good view of snow-covered Bald Mtn, and used that as one of my primary references. Formations of 2-3 craft would follow the north-to-south ridge just behind Bald Mtn to the northern edge of the restricted area, and then reverse course to due south. The other group of 2-3 usually flew to the east from just south of the Groom Lake runway, until they

appeared to reach the eastern edge of the restricted area, and reverse course to the west. However, at least one of them appeared to leave the restricted area and keep going almost due east until it went out of sight.

The "light show" was almost continuous from 9 PM until 3 AM the first night I watched, but I noticed a pattern to their activity after about 3 hours of observation. These 5-6 craft appeared to take off from near Papoose Lake, one at a time, individually practice "hovering" (with small, jerky movements centered at one spot in the air) over the runway at Groom Lake for at least 10 minutes, then flew in one large, loose formation, with their crazy lights really putting on a fantastic light show across a sphere of 2-5 miles, for another 10-15 minutes. Then they broke up into 2 groups of 2-3, and flew in slightly tighter formations, one n-s, and the other e-w. Several times during this period of 15-20 minutes, I saw one of the craft from each group approach each other to within about 5 miles, and then seem to "hover" there for a minute. At least twice, I thought I saw a very thin laser light shine between them, as if they were communicating via an intraformation data link, after which each craft rejoined their group and continued their formation flying in groups of 2-3. After a total of 45-50 minutes of "flight," both groups appeared to split up, and individually head back toward Papoose Lake. The individual craft reappeared no more than 10 minutes later, to start the cycle again, with individual craft practicing "zig-zag hovering" over the Groom Lake Runway.

The altitude of these craft usually stayed between 3000 and 7000 feet above ground level (AGL), probably in an attempt to stay below the ridge lines for anyone viewing from afar. About once an hour I saw one of them climb to approximately 10000 AGL for a minute, apparently to observe (or remotely control) one or more of the other craft in maneuvers such as the "forward somersault" described below.

I had my VHF scanner with me, but I didn't have any frequencies for Groom Lake. I did have the frequencies for Nellis AFB and McCarren Airport, but I didn't hear much traffic from them, and what I did hear didn't seem related to what I was seeing. There wasn't anything to see after the craft all landed at about 3 AM, but at 3:30 or 3:45, I heard a "Janet" 737 leaving Nellis AFB. When it came in for a landing at Groom Lake, it flew only a few miles south of me, and its lights looked like those of any normal 737, i.e. -- much different than the ones I'd been watching all night.

After watching the first Janet 737 land at about 4 AM, I drove to a bigger parking spot just a mile or so south of

the Black Mailbox, to get farther away from the road. I then tried to sleep for a few hours before sunrise. However, it was so cold that even wearing thermal underwear, two medium-heavy coats, two pairs of gloves, and two stocking caps, I could only sleep for about 15 minutes at a time before the cold awakened me and I had to start the car to get warm. Then, a few "cammo dudes" started coming in to work at about 5:15 AM, and all of them honked their horns (vigorously) as they drove by on SR375, to make sure I was awake.

16Dec94 Night

I went out to watch again Friday night (16Dec94), from a spot that I liked the best of all (of those along SR375). It was a small pull-off on the north side of SR375 about 75 yards from the Groom Lake Road (after passing Groom Lake Road on the left as you're heading toward Rachel). It seems to be the best place to watch from, because it's higher than all of the other viewpoints along SR375, which enables viewers to see more airspace behind the ridge lines. However, there's only room for a couple of cars to park at this spot, without blocking each others' ability to enter or leave. This spot was where I got closest to the craft flying east and west over Hancock Summit -- when they passed about 13 or 14 miles due south of this spot.

When I arrived at 9 PM, "they" were already flying. At about 1010 PM, I watched one group of 5 vehicles split into two groups, one of 2, and another of 3. The group of 3 flew north to Bald Mountain, and turned around to fly back south. One of the 3 stayed up higher and behind the other two, who were flying south at about 450 knots, with one object flying directly behind the other. I was watching very carefully, expecting something to happen, because I had seen this before; and also because of the way the third, up-high one was obviously positioned to watch (or remotely control?) the other two. Sure enough, the craft behind the other one did a "forward somersault" over, in front of, under, and then back behind the one in front. I would bet my pilot's wings that this craft exceeded 1000 knots (see calculations below) without generating a sonic boom (which usually occurs at about 660 knots), and pulled more g's than any manned aircraft that I've ever seen, while its lights maintained their perfectly horizontal orientation. I'm confident that I saw this "forward somersault" cover at least 1/4th of the field of view of my binoculars, because I was using Bald Mountain and a background star above it as a reference, so that any jiggling of the binoculars didn't affect my perception of the maneuver. Based on my binoculars' field of view of 367 feet per 1000 yards, and my distance of more than 15 miles (26,400 yards), I've calculated that my total field of view was 1.88 miles. The maneuver was a

circle that covered at least 1/4th of that distance -- a diameter of .47 miles. Therefore, the maneuver covered the circumference of a circle of diameter of .47 miles -- a circumference of 1.48 miles, in less than 5 seconds. From all this, I calculate the speed to be between 1066 mph (using 5 seconds for the maneuver); and 1328 mph (using 4 seconds for the maneuver). Unfortunately, I can't really calculate the g's for the maneuver without a weight for the vehicle.

I watched only the 9, 10, and 11 PM flying periods that second night, because of the cold, and my need for sleep.

No interference was noted on any commercial AM or FM radio frequencies, nor on the military VHF frequencies, at any time.

Conclusions and Further Speculations

In summary, I don't really know what I saw, because I didn't see anything except lights in the sky. However, based on my experience as an ex-Air Force pilot who's been at the controls of 11 types of jets and 5 types of prop-driven aircraft, for a total of more than 2400 hours of flying time, I'm certain that I wasn't watching lights on a helicopter. I still have 20-20 vision, and I used the same 10x50 binoculars that I've been using for more than 7 years (for astronomy, and for the local dirt track races every Saturday night). I'm sure that the lights weren't from a helicopter because of the "forward somersault" maneuver, and from the way that these lights changed directions and moved in any direction, regardless of their previous motion. In addition, a 6Feb95 AvWeek article said (on page 21) that a "manned aircraft at Groom Lake" was testing an "aircraft coating that changes hues and brightness when subjected to an electrical charge." This "aircraft" was mentioned separately from the "black helicopter" described earlier in the article. I think that enough other people have seen the same lights I have, to cause someone at AvWeek to print this "cover story," with this one sentence buried in a 4-page article that mostly talked about a new "black helicopter."

Furthermore, my experience with conventional propulsion, aerodynamics, control surfaces, and control systems tells me that whatever I saw wasn't using any of these conventional systems.

I'm submitting this "eyewitness account" in hopes that others will go and watch for themselves, and submit their observations to the public.